Abstract

The $20.2 million Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) activity was part of the Education project and represented six percent of the total Namibia Compact. The RSRC activity was designed to provide a well-stocked resource for advancing knowledge and to enhance efforts to develop Namibian society, including supporting civic, educational and entrepreneurial information needs by constructing three large resource centers. A performance evaluation commenced in September 2013. Early results have found that the RSRC activity was partially complete by the end of the Compact. RSRC construction finished before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays and MCA Namibia (MCA-N) and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training. However, many specific tasks and sub-tasks identified by key stakeholders were still incomplete by the time the Compact closed. Additional data collection will commence in 2016 and will employ qualitative and quantitative methods to seek to assess the success of the RSRC activity in achieving its targeted outcomes. An interim report is anticipated to be released in 2017 and final results of the RSRC activity are expected in 2018.

# Measuring Results of the Namibia Regional Study and Resource Centers Activity

In Context

The MCC compact with Namibia was a five-year investment (2009-2014) of $304 million in three projects: Education, Agriculture, and Tourism. The Education project included six major activities, Improving the Quality of General Education, Vocational Training, Improving Access to and Management of Textbooks, Investment in Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRCs), Expanding and Improving Access to Tertiary Finance, and HIV/AIDS Plans/Training Activity. The RSRC activity consisted of two components: construction of three RSRCs and technical assistance and training of RSRC staff. The $20.2 million RSRC activity is the subject of the interim results described here. This component represents 6% percent of the total compact. Other components of the compact are the subject of forthcoming independent evaluations.

Namibia Compact Budget
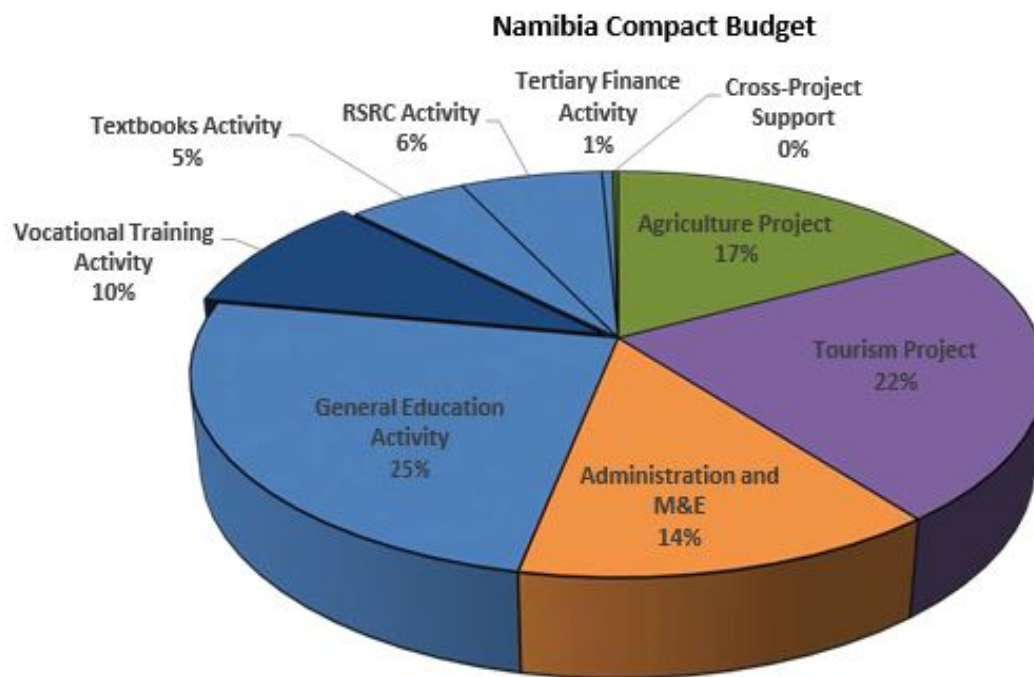
Program Logic

The Education project was designed to alleviate workforce quality constraints to private sector-led growth by enhancing the equity and effectiveness of basic, vocational, and tertiary education. The RSRC activity consisted of (i) the construction of the first three of ultimately 13 large resource centers, which provide a wealth of documentation, information resources, training materials and programs, and study facilities to local citizens and (ii) technical assistance and training for developing RSRCs into key components of a regionally administered and community focused library system. It was designed to provide a well-stocked resource for advancing knowledge and to enhance efforts to develop Namibian society, including supporting civic, educational and entrepreneurial information needs.
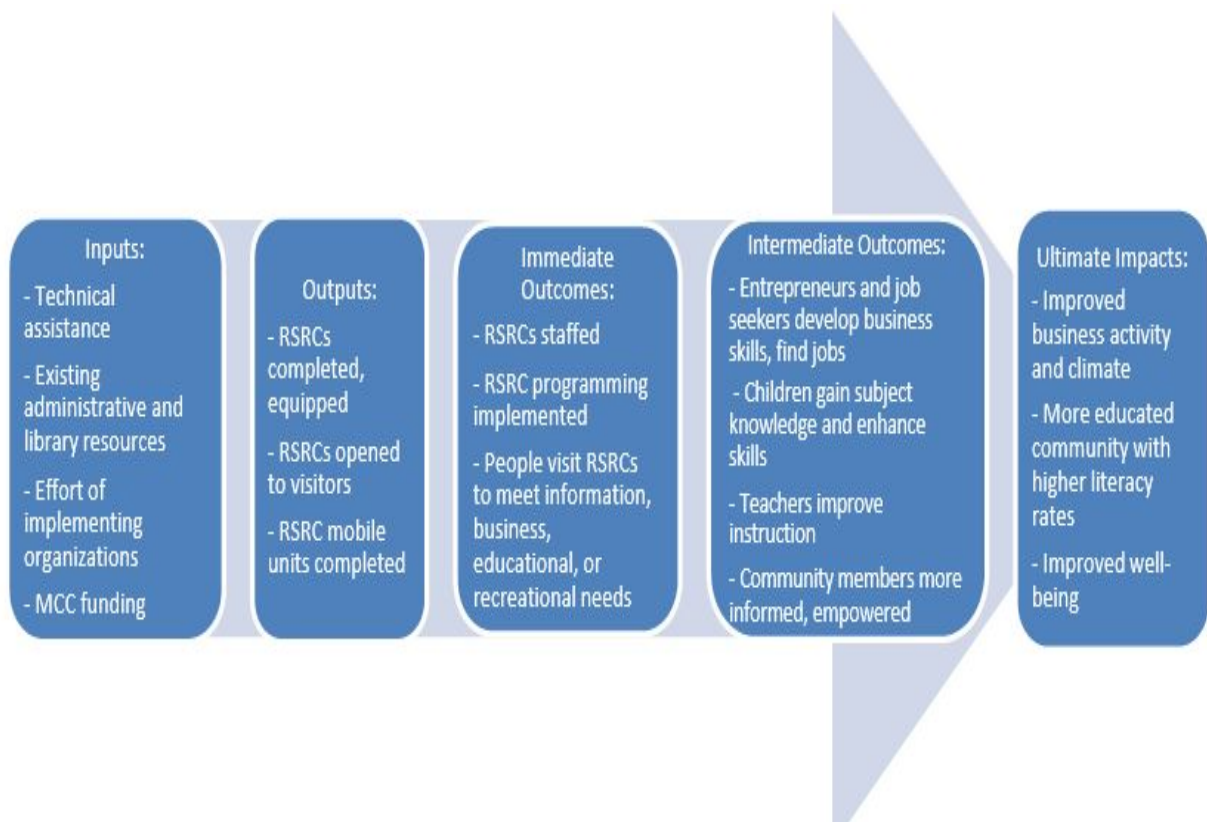
There were several key assumptions underlying the RSRC program logic during the design of the investment:

- New RSRCs will attract a larger number of patrons who will use the facilities and materials to undertake activities that will increase their income earning potential (such as use computers to work on their CVs or obtain information to start or improve a business), utilize electronic and hard learning materials to improve their education or do homework to improve their performance in school, and civic engagement.
- The key obstacle to making progress on the issues targeted in the program logic (e.g., employment

and education outcomes) was a lack of information or access to technology.

Measuring Results

MCC uses multiple sources to measure results, which are generally grouped into monitoring and evaluation sources. Monitoring data is collected during and after compact implementation and is typically generated by the program implementers; it focuses specifically on measuring program outputs and intermediate outcomes directly affected by the program. However, monitoring data is limited in that it cannot tell us whether changes in key outcomes are attributable solely to the MCC-funded intervention. The limitations of monitoring data is a key reason why MCC invests in independent impact evaluations, which use a counterfactual to assess what would have happened in the absence of the investment and thereby estimate the impact of the intervention alone. Where estimating a counterfactual is not possible, MCC invests in performance evaluations, which compile the best available evidence and assess the likely impact of MCC investments on key outcomes.

Monitoring Results

The following table summarizes performance on output and outcome indicators specific to the evaluated program.

Indicators	Level	Baseline (2009)	Actual Achieved (09/2014)	Target	Percent Complete
RSRCs completed	Output	0	3	3	100%
Percent of positions at RSRCs staffed	Output	0	58	100	58%
RSRCs opened to visitors	Output	0	3	3	100%
Visits to MCA-N assisted RSRCs	Outcome	0	0	240,000	0%
Library loans of books and learning and study materials from MCA-N assisted RSRCs	Outcome	0	0	32,000	0%

Library loans of books and learning and study materials from MCA-N assisted mobile units	Outcome	0	0	1,980	0%

Source: (e.g. Closeout ITT from December 2014, including reporting through the end of the compact, based on reporting from MCA-N and the Ministry of Education.)

The average completion rate of output and outcome targets is 43 percent. In 2 of the 6 indicators, targets were met or exceeded. However, due to delays in construction and staffing, the three RSRCs were not opened until shortly before the Compact closed in September 2014 and data was not available for the Outcome indicators by Compact closeout; hence the outcomes all reflect 0% completion.

Evaluation Questions

In September 2013, the Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington was contracted to conduct a performance evaluation of the RSRC activity. The evaluation was designed to answer questions such as:

- Was the MCC investment implemented according to plan?
- What types of resources and programming are RSRCs providing?
- Who uses the RSRCs and what do they do?
- Do students, job seekers and business people report outcomes such as improved test scores, job seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by RSRCs?
- How sustainable are the RSRCs?
- How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the RSRCs?
- What is the influence of the RSRCs beyond their walls?

The evaluation is split into two components. Component 1, which is covered in the results described here, primarily consisted of key informant interviews and was designed to address the first evaluation question. During the course of Component 1 data collection, TASCHA expanded the evaluation question due to concerns that the existing question was too broad to be answered sufficiently. The revised question reads, "To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact and what factors facilitated or inhibited completion?" In order to answer this question, TASCHA identified nine tasks [1] and 29 subtasks related to completion of the RSRC activity. For each task, TASCHA examined the degree of completion of the task and any inhibiting or facilitating factors that were

experienced.

Component 2 will employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to seek to assess questions two through seven. Evaluation results for Component 2 will be made available in an interim report in 2017 and a final report in 2018.

Evaluation Results

TASCHA found that, at a high-level, both RSRC components were completed: RSRC construction finished before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays; and MCA-N and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training, the scope of which grew in response to the increasingly apparent needs of the Ministry of Education. To this extent, it can be said that the RSRC Activity met its high-level goals.

At the task and sub-task levels, results were mixed. TASCHA found that by Compact closeout four implementation tasks were complete – IT & Equipment, Management, Mobile Library Units, and Service Delivery – while five were incomplete – Community Needs Assessment, Staffing, Facilities, Collections, and Relationship Building. As a result, TASCHA concluded that the RSRC implementation tasks were *Partially Complete* [2] by Compact closeout. However, the complexity of the RSRC activity should be taken into account when interpreting its overall success, particularly since all tasks and sub-tasks experienced inhibiting factors. The three largest inhibiting factors identified by TASCHA were (i) low capacity of local industry and workforce; (ii) construction delays; and (iii) proportionately limited personnel resources.

These first two issues were largely related. The construction industry did not have the capacity to carry out the volume of work required to build the facilities, leading to delays for rebidding processes.

Additionally, timeline changes (mostly construction-related) lead to delays in the staffing and training process of RSRC staff. Finally, limited personnel resources within the government inhibited the leadership of the activity. Despite significant effort and dedication to this activity, the Ministry of Education in Namibia did not have the capacity to administer the RSRC activity at the level expected by MCA-N, mostly due to a shortage of personnel at the implementing entity. Thus, MCA-N had to take a major role in providing tactical leadership for the RSRC activity, which had not been the original vision.

Evaluator	Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA)
Methodology	Qualitative (key informant interviews, document review, and observations)

Evaluation Period	March-April 2015
Immediate Outcome	Component 1 of the RSRC evaluation focused on implementation of the RSRC activity up through the opening of the RSRCs. Thus, immediate outcomes were not included within the scope of this round of data collection. However, the Component 1 report has determined that many outputs necessary for the success of the immediate outcomes have been achieved, such as construction of the RSRC buildings, developing business and student services and resources, and purchasing, installing and configuring the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS).
Intermediate Outcome	Intermediate outcomes were not included within the scope of Component 1.
Ultimate Impact	Ultimate impact was not included within the scope of Component 1.

Lessons Learned

For infrastructure activities, a master plan should be developed – The implementation of the RSRC activity was largely characterized by an emergent rather than established implementation plan. There was no single overarching plan covering all tasks, but different elements of the RSRC activity were determined over time during the planning and implementation process and were documented in different reports. A master plan with a clearly defined list of targeted goals is instrumental in identifying the tasks to be completed, setting a timeline, and determining that the same vision is shared by all key stakeholders. If an emergent plan is unavoidable, a master plan can and still ought to be developed by assessing progress as early into implementation as possible and consolidating the decisions that have been made. A project without a master plan is both difficult for MCC and MCA-N to manage and difficult to evaluate its implementation performance.

A designated infrastructure lead within each relevant project team is also vital for creating integrated work plans – In MCA-Namibia, there was one Infrastructure team that was supporting all infrastructure projects across the Compact. This included various projects such as rehabilitating entrance gates and constructing employee housing in a national park, constructing state veterinary offices, and rehabilitating 48 schools. However, infrastructure for different projects necessitates relationship- building with different government entities in order to be effective. Without an infrastructure lead within each project team, it is hard to create integrated work plans and manage relationships appropriately.

Implementing partner agreements between the MCA and the implementing entity should be required in order to ensure the necessary tactical leadership – As discussed above, a key inhibiting factor of implementing this activity was limited personnel resources of the government entity responsible for this activity. Additionally, there was a lack of communication about which tasks would be led by the government entity and which would be led by MCA-N. This should have compelled MCA-N to negotiate

a better leadership function, but they may have fallen short from a lack of clear guidance. For future projects of this magnitude, to ensure all stakeholders have the same understanding of leadership roles, an implementing partner agreement should be created between the implementing entity and MCA-N, which specifies what role the implementing entity will play in oversight and where technical assistance is needed.

Finally, key informants recommended changes to future Compact agreements. Two respondents advised that Compacts in other countries require maintenance strategies from the client-user early in the project to ensure clear lines of responsibility and dedicated funding.

Next Steps

Data collection for Component 2 will consist of two rounds, with the first round commencing in 2016. Component 2 will employ multiple qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, including patron surveys, panel studies, interviews, focus group discussions, documentary analysis, and observations, to seek to address evaluation questions two through seven above. The first Component 2 report, focusing on the initial round of data collection, is anticipated to be available for public dissemination in mid-2017. A final report is expected in late 2018.

Endnotes

1. The nine main tasks identified by TASCHA are: Community Needs Assessment, IT & Equipment, Staffing, Facilities, Collections, Relationships, Management, Mobile Library Units, and Service Delivery.
2. The Evaluator identified five degrees of completion – Complete, Mostly Complete, Partially Complete, Mostly Incomplete, and Incomplete. Partially Complete is defined as "at least four tasks technically complete; some parts of remaining tasks complete or close to completion" (Namibia RSRC Activity Performance Evaluation: Component 1 Report, page 54).